

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Securing America From Epidemics Act.

I thank my colleagues, Congressmen BERA and FITZPATRICK, for introducing this bill and for their work to address this important issue.

COVID-19 has shown once again that pandemics know no borders, and that the United States and the world must be better prepared to respond to disease outbreaks, including pandemics, around the world.

The bill authorizes the United States to participate in the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, or CEPI, an alliance of countries and private partners that are financing and coordinating the developing of new vaccines for infectious diseases.

In addition to COVID-19, CEPI has developed a list of priority diseases with epidemic potential, including MERS, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome.

By leveraging contributions from member states with expertise and funding by private partners, CEPI seeks to develop vaccines before a disease outbreak occurs.

I would note, parenthetically, that in October of 2020, the Trump administration gave CEPI a \$20 million grant to advance its work.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Johns Hopkins Resource Center, COVID-19 has killed over 4,092,000 people worldwide, including 609,000 in the United States and in my home State of New Jersey, 26,545 deaths, the most COVID-19 deaths per capita in the United States.

The pandemic could cost the global economy approximately \$10 trillion, or more than 12 percent of global GDP. The loss of jobs and businesses is unprecedented in modern times. And all of us know it from our case work working with our local businesses. This has been an incredibly horrible pandemic, and we have to make sure it is never repeated.

Developing vaccines and treatment for emerging infectious diseases is not just an issue of individual health, but it is important to national security, including economic security.

Our committee has worked together on many pieces of legislation over the last several months in response to COVID-19. The SAFE Act, for example, is an example of this kind of bipartisan effort.

I urge all my colleagues who believe we must do all we can to prevent another pandemic like COVID-19 from emerging in the future to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has demonstrated the need for collective global action to end pandemics. The Securing America From Epidemics Act authorizes the United States to galvanize that collective response by partnering in CEPI so that we may lead in building a more effective global framework.

We call COVID-19 a once-in-a-century pandemic, but we all share concerns that with the world growing smaller and smaller every day that these outbreaks will only become more and more frequent and clearly more catastrophic. There is an urgent need for the public-private global action H.R. 2118 would help accelerate, not only for COVID-19, but God forbid, for any other future pandemics.

I thank my colleague, Representative AMI BERA, for his leadership in championing this bill. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2118.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

DESERT LOCUST CONTROL ACT

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1079) to establish an interagency working group to develop a comprehensive, strategic plan to control locust outbreaks in the East Africa region and address future outbreaks in order to avert mass scale food insecurity and potential political destabilization, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1079

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Desert Locust Control Act”.

SEC. 2. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to prioritize efforts to control the ongoing desert locust outbreak in East Africa and other affected regions, mitigate the impacts on food security, economic productivity, and political stability, improve interagency coordination to prevent future outbreaks, and promote resilience in affected countries.

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The United States Agency for International Development reports that countries

in East Africa are currently suffering the worst desert locust outbreak in decades, which will devour crops and pasture and destroy local livelihoods across the region.

(2) As of December 2020, the Food and Agriculture Organization reported that there were 42 million people experiencing acute food insecurity in East Africa, which numbers are projected to increase if the desert locust outbreak is not controlled.

(3) The desert locust outbreak in East Africa, particularly in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia, is negatively impacting food security, local livelihoods and economic productivity, and may threaten political stability in the region.

(4) Proactive investments now to control the desert locust outbreak could reduce the need for a much larger United States humanitarian response effort later, as well as support economic and political stability and build resilience in affected countries.

(5) In order to optimize the United States response to the desert locust outbreak, an interagency working group should be established to develop and implement a comprehensive, strategic plan to control the desert locust outbreak in East Africa and other affected regions, mitigate impacts on food security, economic productivity, and political stability and prevent future outbreaks.

SEC. 4. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The President shall establish an interagency working group to coordinate the United States response to the ongoing desert locust outbreak in East Africa and other affected regions, including the development of a comprehensive, strategic plan to control the outbreak, mitigate the impacts on food security, economic productivity, and political stability, and prevent future outbreaks.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The interagency working group shall be composed of the following:

(A) Two representatives from the United States Agency for International Development.

(B) One representative from each of the following:

(i) The United States Mission to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture.

(ii) The National Security Council.

(iii) The Department of State.

(iv) The Department of Defense.

(v) The Department of Agriculture.

(vi) Any other relevant Federal department or agency.

(2) CHAIR.—The President shall designate one of the representatives from the United States Agency for International Development described in paragraph (1)(A) to serve as chair of the interagency working group.

(c) DUTIES.—The interagency working group shall—

(1) assess the scope of the desert locust outbreak in East Africa and other affected regions, including its impact on food security, economic productivity, and political stability in affected countries;

(2) assess the impacts of restrictions relating to the coronavirus disease 2019 (commonly referred to as “COVID-19”) pandemic on efforts to control the desert locust outbreak and mitigate its impacts and in exacerbating food insecurity;

(3) monitor the effectiveness of ongoing assistance efforts to control the desert locust outbreak and mitigate its impacts and identify gaps and opportunities for additional support to such programs;

(4) review the effectiveness of regional and multilateral efforts to control the desert locust outbreak and the coordination among relevant United States Government agencies, regional governments, and international organizations, including the World

Food Programme and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; and

(5) not later than 90 days after the establishment of the interagency working group under subsection (a), develop and submit to the President and the appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive, strategic plan to control the desert locust outbreak, including a description of efforts to—

(A) improve coordination among relevant United States Government agencies, regional governments, and international organizations, including the World Food Programme and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization;

(B) ensure delivery of necessary assets control the desert locust outbreak and humanitarian and development assistance to address and mitigate impacts to food security, economic productivity, and political stability; and

(C) to the extent practicable, prevent and mitigate future desert locust and other, similar destructive insect outbreaks (such as Fall Armyworm) in Africa and other parts of the world, which require a humanitarian response.

(d) INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP SUPPORT.—The interagency working group shall continue to meet not less than semi-annually to facilitate implementation of the comprehensive, strategic plan required by subsection (c)(5).

(e) SUNSET.—This Act shall terminate on the date that is 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, or at such time as there is no longer an upsurge in the desert locust outbreak in East Africa, whichever occurs earlier.

(g) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1079, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1079, the Desert Locust Control Act introduced by my colleague, Representative CHRIS SMITH, ranking member of the Africa and Global Health and Global Human Rights Subcommittee.

Starting in late 2019, swarms of locusts entered the Horn of Africa from the Gulf of Aden, multiplying and spreading throughout the region. Ever since it began, the locust outbreak has plagued the most vulnerable and threatened their ability to lead full lives, generate income, and to feed themselves and their families.

Locusts are a highly mobile insect and have the capacity to consume vast amounts of crops in a very short period of time. Even a small swarm can consume food for up to 35,000 people each day. This has devastated large swaths of crops throughout East Africa, including Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia, and stretching as far as Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Food security is already hanging by a thread in this region, and efforts to control the scale of destruction have been hindered by COVID restrictions, lack of reliable data, and the geographic reach of the outbreak across multiple countries. While some efforts have been successful in containing the outbreak from spreading further into West Africa, good rains this spring allowed for additional breeding, threatening future harvests in Somalia and Ethiopia. This measure would harmonize efforts across the United States Government to evaluate and respond to the locust outbreak, bringing in the support of the U.S. mission to the Food and Agricultural Organization, USAID, and others to establish a working group responding to the outbreak.

We have already seen the ripple effects of COVID on poverty, food insecurity, health, education, and so much more. We must ensure that we don't let this outbreak continue to exacerbate and accelerate those already existing challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Desert Locust Control Act, a bill I introduced along with my good friend and colleague, Representative KAREN BASS of California, and we have worked on this issue together for quite a long time trying to mitigate its impact that it is having, particularly on Africa.

I thank Representatives MEEKS and MCCAUL for their work in ensuring that this legislation is on the floor today so that we can vote on it and hopefully see it enacted into law.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will establish—and this is the core of it—an interagency working group to develop a comprehensive, strategic plan to control locust outbreaks in the East Africa region and address future outbreaks in order to avert famine, starvation, and mass scale food insecurity and potential political destabilization that goes along with all of that.

According to USAID: “The desert locust is one of the most destructive migratory pests in the entire world, rapidly consuming most vegetation in its path, including crops and pastureland critical to maintaining the food security and livelihoods of populations in East Africa. Locust swarms are highly mobile and carried on the wind; swarms can travel up to 100 miles per day, and even a relatively small, 0.4 square mile-sized swarm can consume

an amount of food sufficient for approximately 35,000 people in one day.”

As recently as July 6, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, or FAO, has said that “a desert locust upsurge is still underway in the Greater Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula,” and that “although substantial control operations are underway, the battle to control the desert locust is not yet over.”

The World Bank notes that: “A new generation of locusts emerges every eight weeks. Each generation, on average, sees a 20-fold increase in the population. The growing swarms spread to new areas, disrupting the food supply, upending livelihoods and requiring substantial resources to address.”

Mr. Speaker, I believe there are three very important reasons to support this bill.

The first is an obligation that we have to mitigate suffering wherever we are able to do so, and prevent starvation, famine, food insecurity, and stunting. Stunting increases when food is not available to young people especially during the first thousand days of life from conception to the second birthday.

The second is our strategic U.S. national interest. Food insecurity causes instability, as we saw with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt a decade ago. Here, the Horn of Africa is vitally important, and we see an area wracked by war and violence, be it the war in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and ethnic violence elsewhere in that strategically important country, or Al-Shabaab's efforts in neighboring Somalia to establish a radical terror regime. On top of this political chaos then is the food crisis caused by locusts, compounded by the ongoing COVID concerns.

The third is that this legislation is both penny-wise and pound-wise. The bill calls for greater intergovernmental coordination so that we don't waste resources through redundant efforts but work in a highly coordinated fashion. Further, by addressing the food insecurity problem at the source, the locusts, we mitigate the need down the road to provide disaster and humanitarian assistance, which is more costly not only in terms of dollars, but most importantly in terms of human lives.

I would further note that just last week Administrator Samantha Power addressed the Foreign Affairs Committee, and she addressed how spending a little money up front can save more down the road, while underscoring there is much work to be done.

She said: “We have treated more than 5 million acres of infested lands since 2020”—and the last administration and this administration is very focused, I would say parenthetically, on this—“preventing the loss of four million metric tons of crops. That's \$1.2 billion worth of crop yields that were saved by virtue of this effort. I gather that things got better and now are turning downward again, so that is something that has my attention.”

She went on to say: “Whether it is providing surveillance, aircraft training, pesticides, and training about how to use the pesticides in order to avoid environmental damage and so forth—it is a very important enabling complement to the other work we do on food security.”

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Finally, I would like to call attention to the yeoman’s work that was done by our past ambassador to the United Nations Food Agencies, Kip Tom. This is an absolutely critical position that tends to be overlooked.

He advised us, provided unbelievably important insights and information that helped us craft a response to push the previous administration to do more. And, hopefully, this will help coordinate everything.

I would note, parenthetically, that President Biden has nominated Cindy McCain to fill that role at FAO, and I look forward to working with her and the rest of the administration on this important initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS), the lead Democrat on this bill.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, once again I thank the chairman and the ranking member for bringing H.R. 1079, the Desert Locust Control Act to the House floor today. As chair of the subcommittee, I am glad to colead this important bill with Ranking Member SMITH.

Ranking Member SMITH has been the lead on this issue for several years. The current Desert Locust Control issue, which predominantly plagues East Africa, is the worst it has been in 70 years, and is causing serious famine and instability in the region.

During a recent House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, USAID Administrator Samantha Power confirmed the need to address the millions of people facing food scarcity. This is compounded with the global resurgence of a new COVID-19 variant; although, in Africa, most people do not yet have access to the vaccine. So this is not just an issue of a pest; this is an issue that affects health systems, child education, local economies, and political stability.

H.R. 1079 is a great first step to alleviate the locust problem in East Africa by aiming to set up an interagency working group to develop a strategy on combating the locust by meeting periodically and annually, and reporting progress to Congress. This bill would also allow the interagency working group to review the effectiveness of regional and multilateral efforts to control the desert locust outbreak and the coordination among relevant U.S. Government agencies, regional governments, and international organizations, including the World Food Program and the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative SMITH for his leadership on this bill, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support H.R. 1079.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to close.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank my good friend and colleague, Congresswoman KAREN BASS, the chair of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations. We have worked so close on so many issues. Sometimes she takes the lead; sometimes I take the lead, but we are always striving for that same outcome, and I thank her for her great support for this. It really is an honor to work with the gentlewoman.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, given the incredible damage locusts can inflict in such a short time, it is critical that our ability to evaluate and respond to these outbreaks is efficient across our government, including the U.S. mission to the Food and Agriculture Organization and to the USAID.

That is exactly what this bill will do to help support regions that were already struggling with food security from being further impacted by locust swarms consuming their crops.

I thank the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations, my colleague, Representative SMITH, for introducing this important bill, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1079, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. MILLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

BASSAM BARABANDI REWARDS FOR JUSTICE ACT

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1036) to amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 to authorize rewards under the Depart-

ment of State’s rewards program relating to information regarding individuals or entities engaged in activities in contravention of United States or United Nations sanctions, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1036

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Bassam Barabandi Rewards for Justice Act”.

SECTION 2. AMENDMENT TO DEPARTMENT OF STATE REWARDS PROGRAM.

Subsection (b) of section 36 of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2708) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (11), by striking “or” after the semicolon at the end;

(2) in paragraph (12), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph.

“(13) the identification or location of an individual or entity that—

“(A) knowingly, directly or indirectly, imports, exports, or reexports to, into, or from any country any goods, services, or technology controlled for export by the United States because of the use of such goods, services, or technology in contravention of a United States or United Nations sanction; or

“(B) knowingly, directly or indirectly, provides training, advice, or other services or assistance, or engages in significant financial transactions, relating to any such goods, services, or technology in contravention of such sanction.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1036.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1036, the Bassam Barabandi Rewards for Justice Act, bipartisan legislation introduced by my friend, the gentleman from South Carolina, Congressman JOE WILSON, and the gentleman from Florida, TED DEUTCH.

Mr. Speaker, whistleblower programs have proven themselves effective over and over again. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Justice collected \$3.7 billion in settlements and judgments from False Claim Act cases against companies and individuals who had defrauded the government. Of the \$3.7 billion, 92 percent came from cases brought by whistleblowers. Whistleblowers have easier access to evidence of misdeeds than outside law enforcement investigators, deeper knowledge of the bad